

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, the system comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted[[,]] to the virtual community[[,]] from the client terminals, ~~which are~~ the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control means, ~~for respective topics,~~ said community processing means including:

message subscription type setting means for setting a subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from ~~that~~ the user,

wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via a browser.

2. (Currently Amended) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, the system comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted[[,]] to the virtual community[[,]] from the client terminals, ~~which are~~ the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics by said access control means, ~~for respective topics,~~ said community processing means including:

message subscription type setting means for setting a subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator,

wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via a browser.

3. (Original) A system according to claim 2, wherein the administrator is determined for each individual virtual community.

4. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein said message subscription type setting means sets a subscription type of each user for each individual virtual community.

5. (Canceled).

6. (Original) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission by said access control means, for respective topics, said community processing means including:

reply message processing means for, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, automatically determining a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing

a message header of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.

7. (Original) A community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

access control means for making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

community processing means for managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission by said access control means, for respective topics, said community processing means including:

reply message processing means for, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, automatically determining a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.

8. (Original) A system according to claim 6, wherein said reply message processing means further automatically determines a topic to which the reply message should belong.

9. (Currently Amended) A message subscription type setting method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, the method comprising:

[[the]] an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted[[,]] to the virtual community[[,]] from the client terminals, the client terminals being ~~which are~~ granted access permission for specified topics by said access control step, ~~for respective topics,~~ the community processing step including: [[the]] a message subscription type setting step of setting a subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from [[that]] the user,

wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via a browser.

10. (Currently Amended) A message subscription type setting method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, the method comprising:

[[the]] a access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and for categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted[[,]] to the virtual community[[,]] from the client terminals, the client terminals being ~~which are~~ granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, ~~for respective topics,~~ the community processing step including:

[[the]] a message subscription type setting step of setting a subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator,

wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via a browser.

11. (Original) A method according to claim 10, wherein the administrator is determined for each individual virtual community.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 9, wherein the message subscription type setting step includes the step of setting a subscription type of each user for each individual virtual community.

13. (Canceled).

14. (Currently Amended) A reply message processing method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

[[the]] an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including:

[[the]] a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message

to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a message header of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.

15. (Currently Amended) A reply message processing method in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, comprising:

[[the]] a access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including:

[[the]] a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.

16. (Original) A method according to claim 14, wherein the reply message processing means includes the step of further automatically determining a topic to which the reply message should belong.

17. (Currently Amended) A program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

[[the]] an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and of categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted[[,]] to the virtual community[[,]] from the client terminals, the client terminals being ~~which are~~ granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, ~~for respective topics,~~ the community processing step including: the message subscription type setting step of setting a subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from [[that]] the user,

wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via a browser.

18. (Currently Amended) A program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and which supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

[[the]] a access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and of categorizing and accumulating messages into a plurality of topics, the messages being posted[,]] to the virtual community[[,]] from the client terminals, ~~which are~~ the client terminals being granted access permission for specified topics in the access control step, ~~for respective topics,~~ the community processing step including:

[[the]] a message subscription type setting step of setting a subscription type indicating the way a user subscribes to the categorized and accumulated messages in accordance with an instruction from a predetermined administrator,

wherein the subscription type includes at least delivery via mail and browsing via a browser.

19. (Currently Amended) A program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a

network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

[[the]] an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including:

[[the]] a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a message header of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.

20. (Currently Amended) A program used in a community-based collaborative knowledge system which can be connected to a plurality of client terminals via a network, and supports knowledge accumulation by categorizing and accumulating messages posted from each client terminal to a virtual community, said program making a computer execute:

[[the]] an access control step of making user authentication of a client terminal as an access request source so as to permit the client terminal to post a message; and

[[the]] a community processing step of managing a virtual community in which a plurality of client terminals can participate, and categorizing and accumulating messages posted, to the virtual community, from the client terminals, which are granted access permission in the access control step, for respective topics, the community processing step including:

[[the]] a reply message processing step of automatically determining, when a reply mail message used to post a reply message is sent back from the client terminal in response to a mail message used to deliver the categorized and accumulated message to a subscriber, a virtual community to which the reply message should belong by analyzing a subject of the reply mail message, and categorizing and accumulating the reply message.